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Jan Church Hafstrom
Andrews University

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Lying on the biblical "King's Highway," the ancient ruin mound of Heshbon is now being excavated.

Come into Heshbon

*by Jan Church Hafstrom
Public Information Officer
Andrews University*

For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon.

Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say, Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared. Numbers 21:26, 27.

Eight years ago Andrews University had its first archaeological expedition in Jordan. Dr. Siegfried H. Horn had chosen the ruin mound of biblical

Heshbon, known to the Arabs as Tell Hesban, about 15 miles southwest of Amman, the capital of Jordan.

Heshbon is referred to in the Old Testament in several places, including Numbers 21 which talks about the city of Sihon as Heshbon.

Dr. Lawrence T. Geraty is director of the 1976 expedition, and he has several interesting stories to tell about past discoveries at the Heshbon site.

"Our typical day begins at 4 a.m. with the rising bell," he said, a little wryly. "We have breakfast at 4:15,

leave for the mound at 4:30 and start work at five.

"We have a second breakfast later, work from about 9 to 11:15, have a 15-minute break, then work for another two-hour stretch. Then we go back to headquarters, have lunch and a siesta. From 4:30 to 6:30 we are involved in camp duties, cleaning and sorting the materials excavated during the day. Supper is at 6:30, and at 7:30 there is a lecture or a staff meeting. Nine p.m. is bedtime."

The majority of the people who

Dr. Lawrence T. Geraty, director, and Dr. Siegfried H. Horn, senior advisor, plan a 1976 trip to Heshbon. Below left, an ancient pot, and, right, the edge of the famous "pools of Heshbon" mentioned in Song of Solomon 7:4.



The only two "rolling stone" tombs in Jordan similar to the one in which Jesus was buried were found at Heshbon.

work on the archaeological expedition are not archaeologists professionally. They include graduate students, faculty from Andrews, and other people who wish some adventure in another area of work. Freelance artists, photographers, writers, and people from various other disciplines sometimes attend as well.

The four successful expeditions in 1968, 1971, 1973, and 1974 added much material to the knowledge of the occupation and cultural history of the Heshbon site from the biblical period

(1200-600 B.C.) through the Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ayyubid/Mamluk periods. Though these names are not familiar to most laypeople, they add to our adventure and interest in what can be found at Heshbon.

Larry Geraty told about the time an early Roman family tomb was discovered. "There had never been a tomb sealed with a rolling stone found in Jordan," he said. "Naturally everyone was interested both from the perspective that Jesus was buried in a

similar type of tomb according to the Gospels, but also because this 2,000-year-old tomb had never been opened before.

"Inside the tomb we found 70 people buried, and along with them were beautiful Roman glass vessels that held unguents and perfumes, Roman pottery, gold, silver, and copper jewelry, coins, and lamps. None of these had been touched for at least 2,000 years."

Heshbon overlooks the Dead Sea in Jordan and is a stone's throw from Mount Nebo. During the 1974 season archaeological treasures unearthed by the team included the best preserved Mamluk bath found in Jordan, a Roman temple dating to the third century A.D., and the fortifications of a 12th-century-B.C. city.

More than 2,500 items were shipped to the U.S. for cataloging, study, and display at Andrews University in the archaeological museum. The Jordanian government kept only a few dozen of the items discovered.

The 1976 season is forecast as an opportune time for excavation according to Dr. Geraty. "A very qualified staff has been organized, including Dr. Siegfried Horn on his last official excavation for Andrews University as senior advisor and object registrar.

"In addition," said Dr. Geraty, "the political situation in Jordan is very stable. The expedition has been urged by the national and local governments to return this summer."

The digs are supported on a very modest budget by donations from individuals, contributions from organizations involved in the research, and others. The 1976 dig is requesting that people interested in helping the expedition send the money to Andrews University to the 1976 Heshbon Expedition, care of Dr. Lawrence T. Geraty, director.

Interestingly enough those contributing in specified amounts will receive a souvenir of the dig such as an ancient ceramic pot, glass vessel, or coin. The contributions are tax-deductible. A brochure and further information on donations is available from the director of the expedition at Andrews.

One of the other discoveries made by the team was the pool of Heshbon mentioned in Song of Solomon. "We tell people," said Dr. Geraty, "that after they see the pool they know what true beauty is!"